

El-Slash-Jane by orphan_account

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, Gen

Language: English

Characters: Billy makes an appearance at some point, Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Hopper shows up sometimes, Jonathan Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, This one cool OC teacher, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Implied Jopper, Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Steve Harrington & Everyone, The Party - Relationship

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2018-02-19

Updated: 2018-03-02

Packaged: 2022-04-21 15:16:00

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 4

Words: 6,940

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

After everything that she had been through, there wouldn't be a single thing to ruin the normality of her new life, the life she'd always wanted to live

El just wants a normal life. And no matter what any interdimensional monsters do, Mike Wheeler and his crazy friends are gonna give that to her.

1. School

El couldn't sleep.

It had been a year and a half of hiding, not leaving the house, and having her friends come to her, and she just wanted a normal life. Like on TV, and in the books Max and Mike had loaned her. She knew she'd never get it, of course. She was too telekinetik, too bad at math. She was afraid of being teased by the other kids in the 9th grade. After all, she still got confused by simple multiplication, and occasionally a word that everybody else seemed to know. A calculator and a pocket dictionary were regulars in her bag. But even after a dinner of McDonalds that Hopper had brought in for her, El could not keep her eyes shut.

The next day, she would be starting 9th grade at Hawkins High School, like all of her other friends. She would be seen as "normal." She could say that she moved from New York or Chicago or Florida to Indiana, and none would be the wiser. She planned to tell people that she moved two years ago and had been homeschooled. She would say that her parents had died when she was young, and was adopted by Chief Hopper. She had befriended Mike, Lucas, Will, Max, and Dustin at summer camp, she would tell them. She would be, to her teachers and classmates, Jane, but to her best friends, she was always El.

But she still worried about not knowing a word in class.

She finally managed to drift off to sleep, having her usual flash of a nightmare, or maybe it was a memory, of the lab. But it was mostly dancing waffles, singing cheese, and little bits of memories of that Summer. She had finally been able to leave the house, and had spent days by the lake with her friends, swimming and laughing all day.

It was practically paradise.

El woke up with a large smile on her face, and jumped out of bed. She looked around her bedroom (mostly boxes, she and Hop had moved that Summer.) Running into the kitchen, she caught a glimpse of Hopper popping Eggos into the toaster.

“Mornin’, kid,” He smiled at her, grabbed the Redi-Whip out of the fridge, and began to slice up some bananas. “How about Eggo delight for breakfast?”

El smiled and nodded. Suddenly, the walkie talkie on the table crackled. El ran over to hear a familiar voice coming out of it. “Up and at ‘em, people! What’s wrong? Tired” Max giggled on the line. An aggravated and sleepy-sounding Dustin’s voice rang through. “Max, it’s 6:57. We technically have three more minutes to sleep before we must dread the thoughts of lateness.”

El could practically hear Maxine rolling her eyes. “You didn’t seem to care about sleep when you and Lucas had a burping contest last night at 11:00 PM.”

El giggled. “El? El, is that you? Please convince Max that she’s being unreasonable and we need our sleep.”

“No, no no. El, please tell Dustin that he’s a filthy hypocrite.”

El tried. “You’re a filly hippocat.”

She heard a girlish giggle from Maxine. “Close enough.”

Another crackle rang through. “Why are you talking about hippocats?” Asked Mike. El smiled. Mike was here.

“Mike! Tell Max and El that we agreed to set our alarms for exactly 7:00 and we have three minutes to sleep.”

“Uh, it is 7:00, Dustin.”

“We spent three minutes wasting our time on this conversation?”

“Yup.”

“Kay, where’s Lucas? He should have been here right now.”

“Right here,” called Lucas.

“I didn’t hear you come in, how long have you been here?” Asked El.

“The whole time. I heard your ridiculous conversation.”

“Great. So that’s three people who betrayed our 7:00 promise.”

“Well, I set my alarm for 7:00, but I woke up before that.”

“Me, too,” Said El. At that moment, Hopper put a plate of Eggos with whipped cream, sliced banana, and chocolate syrup in front of her. “I have to go,” she said. “See you soon.”

Four voices rang out “Bye!” Before she turned off the walkie, she heard Will’s sleepy voice. “What’d I miss?”

She dug into her waffles, but was unable to shake her nervous feelings. What if kids made fun of her? What if she didn’t know how to do something? Or worse, what if somebody suspected her as the “little Russian girl with telekinesis?” She could be killed. She was so afraid of all the prospects, she could barely get her orange juice down.

After finishing her breakfast, she went into her new bedroom and walked over to her dresser. A few days before, Nancy had taken her shopping to buy some more clothes. Hopper didn’t know the first thing about fashion, Nancy had said. So she’d help El pick out some nice outfits.

She pulled out blue pants with holes in the knee, “Jeans,” Nancy had called them. And a red t-shirt. She pulled on a black hoodie and took a look in the mirror. Over the summer, she had grown out her curly brown hair, and now it lay neatly on her shoulders. She decided to brush it out and leave it down. She thought it looked good that way.

She let Hopper snap some pictures of her. He claimed it to be the “happiest, proudest day of his life.” When she asked why, he sobbed, “Now I don’t have to worry where all the eggos went while I was at work.”

El laughed. She knew he was telling a joke, she had gotten good at that. She also had had to learn when Max and Lucas were being serious, or when they were being “sarcastic,” as Mike had taught her. A knock on the door interrupted her thoughts. She opened the door

to find Mike, Lucas, and Max. "Ready?" Max asked. El nodded. She grabbed her bag, gave Hopper a hug goodbye, and walked out with them. Max rode on the back of Lucas's bike, and El rode on the back of Mike's.

"Sooo, El, are you excited?" Max sounded nervous as well. El knew they all were nervous- they wanted something bad to happen on the first day of high school just as much as she did. But El said "Yeah," anyway, because she was excited. She just felt nervous. She wondered if this was what being anxious was like. Being excited and nervous at the same time.

They pulled up to Dustin's house. He came out waving away his mother as he walked down the drive. "Yeah, yeah, I'll feed the cat when I get home. Love you, too, mom!!" He hopped on his bike and joined the others. "Where's Will?" Asked Mike. El could hear the fear in his voice. The last time he had had to ask that question, Will was being possessed by a demon.

And nobody wanted to go there.

"Joyce's driving him," called Dustin. "She's scared to let him out of her sight on the first day of school."

"Can't blame her," agreed Lucas. "We don't need a repeat of last year."

"Halloween" giggled Max.

"Not what I meant. But I'm pretty sure we're too old to go trick-or-treating, anyway."

"What!?" Mike jolted the bike to a stop, making Eleven jump. "No no no. Not yet. Besides, it's El's first year! We gotta let her go!!"

"Huh. Yeah. 'Kay." Lucas continued riding.

They spent the rest of the ride laughing and rehashing the summer. Talking about rides to the lake, treks through the woods, and doing normal kid things. But there was one thing over the summer that El

couldn't tell anyone. The best part of the whole summer. It had kept her awake at night, replaying it in her head. Causing her to smile at random intervals.

She and Mike had spent a day at the lake by themselves. They hadn't told Dustin or Lucas, (They would've made fun of them) but they just wanted to talk. And El remembered the day vividly. She had finally told Mike the secret about her sister, how she had gone to Chicago to find her. How Kali had made Brenner appear, and how upset Kali had seemed when she left. She and Mike had missed each other terribly, and had made up for lost time as much as possible. Mike had given her a mixtape with music he thought she'd like. It had the songs they had danced to at the snowball, and then some. El had listened to it dozens of times since.

But that day at the lake, Mike and Eleven had drawn closer, their heads inches away, and their lips met...

El smiled. She wasn't quite sure what she and Mike had, exactly. But Dustin, Lucas, and Max all made kissy kissy noises when they were in the room together.

El didn't mind. It's not like they were wrong.

They made their way up the road to the school. El had never seen so many kids in one place. They piled out of buses, cars, chained bikes to posts, and walked right into school.

Hawkins High School had seemed big at orientation week, but today it seemed even bigger. The halls felt nicely familiar to the kids. Even though they weren't too excited to give up the freedom summer allowed them, they enjoyed the feeling of routine.

The kids led El to her locker and explained how things worked with the lock. Her combination was 22-11-23, which made El very happy. Mike helped her unload her books into it, before pulling her off into the AV club room to officially "initiate" her into the club.

"Do you, El-slash-Jane Hopper, promise to fulfill the duties of the AV club?" Asked Dustin? El nodded.

“Do you swear to remember to bring snacks when it’s your turn?” Mike choked back a laugh. El nodded again.

“And do you promise to.. Uhh..” Will struggled to remember his line. Max poked him and whispered, “Have fun at all costs.” “Have fun at all costs?” Finished Will.

El giggled. “Yeah.”

“Kay then! You’re in!” Lucas smiled, and the group cheered. Just then, the bell rang, startling El. Mike put a reassuring hand on her shoulder. “It just means we have to go to homeroom. C’mon!”

They walked together to class, and managed to get seats together. The teacher came in.

Mr. Annapola was a middle-aged man with short green hair. He usually wore a funky patterned bow tie, and played music for his students before class (usually AC DC and Zeppelin.)

He smiled at the class. “Hey guys. I’m Albert Annapola. Just call me Pole. I know you guys are nervous and all, and that’s ok. I’m excited to have you here. Why don’t we go around the room and say something about ourselves!” He pointed to Dustin. “You start.”

Dustin stood up and let out a nervous chuckle. “Uh, hi, I’m Dustin.. And... I have a pet cat.”

Pole smiled and nodded. “Nice to meet ya, Dustin. Who’s next?”

They went around the room. Max said that she loved to skateboard, Lucas said he liked video games. Will liked art, Mike had a fear of snakes. When they came to El, she stood up.

“Hi, my name is Jane, and.. I love Eggo Waffles.” Several kids laughed, including El herself. “That’s it.” She sat down.

The rest of the day went swimmingly. El enjoyed all of her classes. She sat with The Party at lunch, and they had AV club after school. It was like she was.. Normal.

Jonathan always said that normal is boring. And that maybe so. But

when you spend your life in a lab being experimented on, you start to enjoy feeling like a human.

She biked home with Mike that day. When they got to her house, El leaned forward and planted a kiss on his cheek. Mike turned a bright shade of red. El giggled and ran into her new house.

“See you tomorrow!” She called.

2. Paint

Summary for the Chapter:

Ah, yes, that awkward moment when your boyfriend's sister is more aware of your relationship than you are.

A/N: Thank you so much for all the likes and follows! Loads of thanks to Lindsey Byers for helping me write this chapter! She was a big help here!

I think this'll have eleven (ehehe) chapters. But I also have other fics that I'm working on, plus I have school, so I'm sorry if I don't make enough. If I go M.I.A. for more than a week, I'm probably writing a lot.

Once again, thanks, and enjoy!

El was cold.

This was nothing unusual. Hopper hadn't installed a heating system yet. Either they used the fireplace or piled on the sweaters. It wasn't that bad. El had found some cute sweaters that she liked on her shopping trip with Nancy. Still, she was less than pleased when the temperatures dropped to the low 50s mid-October. It reminded her of the cold, harsh winter ahead of them. She preferred to think of something that made her happy: The prospect that she could actually go trick-or-treating this year.

After what Mike had said the first day of school, El had practically BEGGED Hop to let her go trick-or-treating. She promised to wear a mask or something that wouldn't reveal her. She and the Party were in El's new basement, considering what they should go as one day after school when the phone rang.

El walked over to pick it up. "Hello?" She asked.

"El?" Asked a voice on the other end of the line. "It's me, Nancy. Your dad asked me to ask- do you wanna go shopping this weekend for stuff to decorate your new room? I know it's a bit plain, so we could get some paint samples, look at some furniture.. Stuff like that.

Sound good?

El nodded, then realized Nancy couldn't hear her. "Yeah," She chirped. "Yeah, that sounds great."

"Awesome! I'll see you Saturday! Bye!" The line clicked.

"Bye!" El hung up.

Dustin look at her questioningly. "What was that?" He inquired.

"Oh, Nancy wants to take me shopping to get stuff for my room. She says she wants to get.. Uh... paint.. Paint something." She bit her lip

Mike smiled kindly. "Paint samples?" El nodded. He was always so kind and gentle with her, and explained words she didn't know.

"What are they?" She wondered aloud.

"They're like, little squares of colors that you get at the store. If you like the color, you ask for some paint in that shade. Then, you can paint stuff with it. Like your room and stuff," piped up Will.

El looked at him in confusion. "I thought you weren't supposed to put paint on the walls..?"

"Different type of paint," Commented Mike. "Like the type you use to change the color of the wall. You put the new paint over the old paint. That's what Nancy wants to do to your room."

El nodded, getting a new understanding of it.

"What color are you gonna do?" Mike queried. El frowned in thought.

"Hmm.. maybe pink.. Or blue. I like blue." She pondered. Shrugging she sat back down on the couch between Mike and Will. "We'll just have to wait and see."

Will smiled. "I bet it'll look great."

"This is a lovely conversation, but can we please take attendance now?" Lucas whined. Mike rolled his eyes. "Yeah, yeah."

“Great. Paladin?”

“Here,” Mike rolled his eyes again.

“Mage?”

“Here!” Chirped El.

“Zoomer?”

“What’s up?” Max mimicked a break dancing move.

“Ranger, here. Cleric?”

“Hi.” Will chuckled.

“And... yup that’s it there’s no one else let’s start the meeting now.” Lucas closed his book with a smirk.

“Very funny, smartass.” But Dustin couldn’t contain a smile. Lucas rolled his eyes. “Bard?” Dustin cracked a satisfied smile. “Here.” He re-claimed his seat on the couch.

Lucas rolled his eyes. “Great. Mike? First order of business?”

Mike stood up. “Halloween. What are we gonna do? Like, we could do a certain group costume? Or... we could go as individual things? Any ideas?” He resumed his seat on the sofa, and El leaned her head against his shoulder.

Max tapped her chin in thought. “Horror movies?” The group shuddered.

“Star Wars?” Dustin spoke up. Lucas raised an eyebrow. “Dibs on C3PO.” Max chuckled. “I wanna be R2-D2!” She high-fived Lucas.

“Okay,” Mike stood up. “Those in favor of Star Wars themes costumes, say ‘I.’” Six voices chorused “I” back at him. He nodded. “Awesome. So who’s gonna be who?” He sat down again.

Dustin leapt up “I CALL DIBS ON CHEWY.” He calmly sat down on the floor. Will spoke up.

"I think Mike and El should go as Han Solo and Leia." Four voices ooooooohed in response, Will included. Mike blushed furiously, but nodded his head. El beamed.

El and Nancy went shopping to go get the paint and her costume for Halloween the next day. They headed to Hawkins Hardware first, where they looked at furniture at paint samples. But El couldn't get a certain question out of her head.

"Nancy," began El as they roamed the aisles of colorful paper cards. "What's a boyfriend?" She asked innocently.

Nancy fidgeted. "It's sorta like what you and my brother have," She explained. "Like, you date and you kiss and you hold hands, that sorta thing."

"So like the snowball was a date?"

"Yeah, but you have to go on more than one date to be boyfriend and girlfriend. And usually you've kissed a couple of times. Do you like this blue?" She held up a sample.

"Oh," El smiled. "I've kissed Mike."

If Nancy had had water in her mouth, she'd have spit it out right then and there. "WHAT!? That little asshole told me otherwise!" She smirked. "I totally called it." While El blushed, Nancy smiled triumphantly and grabbed another sample. "How 'bout this one?" It was a light pink/creme sheet, that would probably cover the white walls of her new room pretty well. El nodded.

"This one."

They managed to find some other things she liked: Shelves, a good bed frame, and a yellow comforter with matching pillows. The girls paid and went into Halloween Land, where they ran into Max and Lucas.

"C'mon, R2-D2's is cool! Mine'll make me look like a nerd!" Whined Lucas.

Max snorted. "Look like a nerd? Dude, I don't know if you know this, but you are a nerd. It's not that bad. And nobody will see your face!"

You'll be fine." She tossed the costumes over her arm, and almost walked straight into El.

"Ohmygod! El! I'm so sorry! I didn't see you there! Lucas and I are getting our costumes. You?"

El nodded. "I have to find princess Leia." Max beamed. "You and Mike are gonna look. So. Freaking. Cute. I can't wait to see!" She sighed theatrically. "Why must we wait another month?"

"Thank God," groaned Lucas. "Gives me time to fake my death. Or at least have a growth spurt..."

So that's all I have for you guys today! The next chapter (Which will kinda be a continuation of this one, plus a school dance- you're gonna see a lot of those) will be up within the next week or so, probably sooner. Once again, big big big thanks to LindseyByers, who is a great friend on and off the site :3

See y'all later!

~Lizzi < 3

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

Happy Halloween! Or... is it Valentine's Day? Oh, who can tell. Either way, Love is in the Air, and it's more than a little awkward, especially to four middle schoolers in love.

Notes for the Chapter:

Yeah, this sucks. I'm sorry, it was very rushed.

"No. No. No. I refuse. You cannot do this to me! I will not. No." She threw the frilly headband onto the couch.

"Please, Max? Pretty please? You can't be a devil without your horns!!"

"No!! I look ridiculous."

"You look.. Really nice."

"You can't sweet-talk me, Lucas."

"I CAN TRY!!!"

"Could you two stop bickering, please? I know I yell at Mike and El for PDA, but this is a million times worse. Max, you look cool. Lucas, you tried. NOW COME ON!" Dustin rolled his eyes. They were so. Annoying sometimes.

Max rolled her eyes and put the headband back on.

Hawkins High School was having an actual Halloween dance, for the first time ever. Max and Lucas were going together, as well as El and Mike. Even better, the Party had convinced Mr. Anapola to reschedule the dance for the 27th, so they could still go trick-or-treating on Halloween. Max and Lucas had been arguing for an hour and a half about their costumes. Lucas had dressed up as Marty McFly, and he thought he looked cool. Max had gotten a demon

costume, but hadn't realized it came with a large headband that had horns, and a huge bow. She hated it. But honestly, Dustin didn't have time for Max to deny the fact that she was a girl. They had to go. They were supposed to meet up with Will, El and Mike in T-minus 14 minutes.

"Get your asses moving, already." Dustin rolled his eyes and headed out the door, ready as ever in his Chewbacca costume. They had ended up saving their Star Wars costumes for the actual trick-or-treating on halloween night, so they all had found different costumes to wear for the party. Dustin, however, had grown too attached to his Chewbacca costume and gave up trying to find a new one. Will was going as an astronaut (because he had a helmet in the back of his closet), Mike was going as a circus ringmaster, and El, for whatever reason, was going as a panda.

Meanwhile, Jonathan had driven Mike, El, and Will to the dance already, promising to meet Nancy there. The kids chatted while Jonathan drove, a smile playing on his lips. He was not one to want to be normal, he was a self-proclaimed freak, of course. But El? El deserved it, 100%. He was glad she could have this normalcy.

They all filed into the gym that was decorated accordingly. Purple and black streamers hung from the walls, snacks sat on tables covered in orange tablecloths, and "Sunday Bloody Sunday" by U2 played while kids danced around in costume. El grabbed Mike's hand and dragged him towards the snack table, where Mr. Pole was snacking on some jello.

"Mr. Pole! Mr. Pole! This is amazing!" El looked around the gym in wonder. Mr. Pole smirked.

"Well, I had the best decor committee. Speaking of, where are Lucas and Maxine?" He looked around the gym, hoping they'd pop up somewhere.

"HEY!!" Dustin raced over to them, grabbed a cupcake, and snagged a chair. "They're behind me somewhere, they don't give a shit about being tardy- sorry, Mr. Pole."

Pole shrugged. "I cursed even more when I was your age, I'm no

hypocrite.”

El realized she still didn’t know what that hypocrite word meant, and made a mental note to ask later.

“I love your costume, Mike- where’d you get it?” Asked Pole as he dug his spoon into the “bloody” cherry jello.

Mike grinned. “My sister helped me make it. She said it would be cool.”

Pole smiled and nodded. “Ah, Nancy. I still have her for AP biology!” He ran a hand through his green hair. “Anyway, sorry to bore you kids, go have fun!” He grinned and shooed the kids off. Mike and El headed over to get pictures (Taken by a certain Byers brother), Will and Dustin were looking for people to dance with, and Lucas and Max were challenging each other to a dance off while Duran Duran’s “Girls On Film” boomed loudly over the speakers.

“So, like.. I’ve been meaning to ask you this for a while,” began Lucas once they had declared Max the winner to thunderous applause.

“Yeah?” Max took a sip of her Orange Crush, eyebrows raised.

Lucas fiddled with the Dr. Pepper can in his hand. “So like... We’ve never really talked about.. Us.”

On the outside, Max didn’t change her demeanor. On the inside, though, she was betraying every rule she had ever set for herself. Alarms were blaring in her head- this conversation could go one of two ways.

- A) Lucas said he wanted to go official
- B) Lucas said he wanted to break up
- C) Max ran away before he gets the chance to say anything

Okay, so that’s three ways... What was she supposed to do?

Oh. Maybe pay attention to what Lucas was saying.

“So like.. Do you want to like, be “official” and all that?” Lucas motioned as if spreading a banner with his hands while he said

“official.” Max found it cute. Hmm. Maybe it was A after all.

Smirking, she leaned slightly closer to Lucas. “Are you asking me to be your girlfriend, Stalker?”

Lucas avoided her gaze. “Maybe...Look, if you don’t want to, it’s totally fine, and I know we aren’t seeing anyone else anyway so maybe asking was idiotic and-” Max cut him off by closing the gap between them. “Yes,” she murmured into his mouth. They both pulled away, red as plums- excuse you, it’s halloween, in case you weren’t paying attention. They were as red as blood, and grinning like maniacs.

Corey Hart’s “Sunglasses At Night” came on, and Lucas pulled Max back to the dance floor, demonic bow and all. Eventually, a slow song came on, and everyone folded into pairs.

On the other side of the dance floor, Mike and El were swaying to the beat of “Time After Time” by Cyndi Lauper, lost in each other’s eyes. Will was watching them happily. It tickled him blue to see his best friend so happy again- and with the girl that Dustin teasingly called Will’s stepsister.

To be honest, he was right. Joyce and Hopper were hanging out more often. However, Will liked to think he was wrong whenever he said that “you could cut the sexual tension with a knife.”

Will shuddered. Dammit Dustin. You make me think the weirdest things.

Of course, Dustin was the one squealing like a pig when El and Mike leaned in and kissed. He was their number one supporter... And even though he did tease them, he couldn’t be happier to see that their Mike was back.

“Oh, come on! Just one more! And one with your girlfriend!” Mrs. Sinclair held up the camera again.

Lucas almost protested “She’s not my girlfriend” out of habit, when he realized, oh yeah, she was. A smile played on Max’s lips as she

stuck two fingers behind Lucas's head, making rabbit ears.

Yeah, he did kinda look dorky, but they were pretty adorable, at least if you were looking at them from a distance.

Lucas was basically wearing... a gold bodysuit, with a silver mask. Max's costume was much cooler: A long sleeved shirt with R2D2's body printed on it, buttons and all; bright blue-and-white jeans, and blue knee-high boots. Her fiery hair was held back with an orange headband, and she had a cap on that looked like R2's head. She had refused another dress- even though she secretly enjoyed her demon costume- and instead had purchased the male R2D2 costume and made the jeans herself, with some help from Nancy and El.

After Mrs. Sinclair snapped a good thirty pictures, and Erica made a good thirty "nerd" remarks, she finally let them go, and Erica went to meet up with her friends across the street.

The Party agreed to meet at the cul-de-sac at 7:00, just like the year before. El was jumping around with excitement, her messy space buns bouncing around on her head. She had her Leia costume- but she still insisted on wearing her Vans. "They're... space sneakers!" She had explained to Will, who grinned and nodded. Will had dressed up as Luke Skywalker (well, duh! Dustin had exclaimed to him.)

Piling into Jonathan's car, the trio headed down to the cul-de-sac to meet the party, pillowcases in hand. Pulling up to the curb, El craned her neck to see Dustin, Lucas, Max, and Mike, horsing around and laughing. The second the car stopped, Will and El jumped out of the car and ran up to them, high-fiving everyone and grinning.

"Come back here at ten, okay?" Jonathan called from the car. El and Will nodded the affirmative. Jonathan waved and got out, knocking on the Wheeler's door. Nancy answered it.

"Hey! Ready?" Jonathan asked, grinning madly, as the party looked on, smirking.

Nancy nodded, glancing over his shoulder. "Oh my god! You guys! You all look adorable!" Dustin blushed and Mike rolled his eyes. "Yeah, yeah, you and loverboy go on your date, already. Buh-bye

now.” The party snorted with laughter. Nancy walked over to her brother and flicked him in the head. “Tell you what. We’ll drive you shitheads to Loch Nora if you promise not to be just that: shitheads.” The party exchanged glances. Nancy certainly wasn’t momma Steve, but they didn’t want to mess with her either way. And a free ride to free candy? Yes please.

Nodding in unison, Jonathan beckoned them into the car. El and Will, the two smallest, ended up sharing a seat, while Dustin was pretty much sitting on Mike’s lap. Nancy managed to squeeze into the back next to Max, even though she was smooshed up against the window.

They reached Loch Nora as it got dark, jumping out of Jonathan’s tiny car. Will hugged him goodbye and El waved, excited as ever. Mike was watching El, with love in his eyes. Like he was experiencing the wonder for the first time as well. Grinning, El grabbed his hand and pulled him toward the nearest house, practically floating with happiness.

Trick-or-treating was unlike anything she’d ever experienced. She got free candy, and best of all: nobody knew she was Eleven. Most people just knew her as Jane Hopper, the sheriff’s daughter, if they knew her at all. El and Max bounced along, making conversation and snacking on Snickers, while Lucas and Mike stared at them, smiles playing on their lips.

Mike was never, ever, ever, ever, ever going to admit it to anyone, (except El herself) but he was totally falling in love with the girl formerly known as 011, and now known as Jane Hopper.

He looked at her as though she was the sun. She radiated his entire day, he missed her when she left, he wanted to wake up every morning reassured that she was there, for him, for the whole world, because she was the most amazing thing in all of the worlds, alternate dimensions, and galaxies far, far away, and deserved the whole world, as the whole world deserved her. He felt selfish for only wanting her for himself, seeing as he felt unfit for the most beautiful, brilliant, sweetest, kindest, most optimistic perfect girl in the world.

Or at least his world.

Something told him, deep inside, that this was the girl that he wanted to- and would!- spend the rest of his life with, not a single doubt involved. Everything was perfect with, around, and for her. It had to be. He wished that she could see herself the way he saw her, yet at the same time he was glad she couldn't, because then she would realize she deserved a man a million times more than Mike Wheeler. But she never would, never could. Because in her eyes, he was the sun. He was the one she wanted to spend every waking moment with for the rest of her life. She wanted that more than anything, even if she wasn't entirely positive how to voice it. She just knew that 1) Mike was the only person she could ever visualize herself loving romantically, and 2) She needed him on a, what had their science teacher said before? A molecular level, the same way she needed food, water, and sleep, but differently, in the same way she needed happiness, hobbies, and friends, in order to feel as though she even had a purpose for living. And she was pretty sure that Mike felt the same way, based on the things that Nancy, Will, Max, and Dustin had told her.

Well, maybe not Dustin. But Nancy, Will, and Max were usually right about these things.

Meanwhile, as Lucas looked on at Max, he was feeling similar feelings. It was as if she had opened his eyes: him, Lucas Sinclair, the loser who swore he'd never fall in love. It's... like a dream he'd never want to wake up from. Because Maxine Mayfield deserved heaven on a platter, from him, from everyone, after the shit she had been through and the pain she had felt. No matter the day of the week, he'd be as ready as he could be to serve her that dish of happiness that she deserved so much.

He didn't agree with Mike on many things. But it was as if he was seeing through his eyes, for the first time in his life.

After meeting Max, and getting a taste of his own medicine from Mike, no matter how accidental it may have been, Lucas indeed wished he had been better about El from the start; it was obvious Mike was head-over-heels for El, the same way Lucas was for Max, or Steve had been- and possibly still was- for Nancy. Like... love. Real, real, true love. Like the shit you see on sappy soap operas, silly rom-coms, and the like. Lucas had always been skeptical before, but

now... it was like somehow, this tomboy teenager and her telekinetic best friend had broken down the two biggest nerds in Hawkins, Indiana, and made them into... humans. Not frogface and midnight. Two people who could love, and be loved. Yes, they were still bullied by Troy, but who wasn't? Yeah, they still repulsed most girls in Hawkins, but the only girls who mattered were the two who cared the most.

Damn. Deep shit, thought Lucas. Maybe I had too many reese's cups. He bit into another one nonetheless.

As for Mike, he knew what he felt. He knew that to any sensible person, it would come across as puppy love or a simple crush. That's why he wouldn't say anything about it. At least for now.

But someday? Someday he'd speak up.

And unbeknownst to him, El would too.

Notes for the Chapter:

I hope you enjoyed!

4. Christmas

Summary for the Chapter:

What is Christmas? Is it just another holiday? Or... is it actually important? And will it be important to Mike?

Or,

What the hell is Mike gonna get El? And why isn't Nancy being helpful? Ugghhgh....

Notes for the Chapter:

DISCLAIMER DISCLAIMER DISCLAIMER: I don't own Stranger Things. And if I owned Netflix, 26 seasons of Doctor Who would be available, as well as the Harry Potter movies and probably La La Land.

"But you've never celebrated before in the big scary lab, have you, El?

"DUSTIN!"

"What? I'm not wrong!"

"Yeah, but that's just not something ya do. It's weird to bring that up."

Dustin rolled his eyes. "Sorry. But I am right?" He looked to El for confirmation, and she nodded. "See! I was right!"

"What exactly is Christmas?" El pondered aloud. She had sort of celebrated it last year. She knew they had had the Snow Ball, but she had to stay home after that, and the Party had been denied regular visits until February, so they hadn't seen each other much.

"Oh. It's supposedly the birthday of some guy named Jesus, but mostly people give each other presents and listen to Bing Crosby," Mike explained.

El nodded. "Ohh. Cool. When is it?"

"December 25th, every year." Lucas nodded.

El's eyes grew wide. "It's the 13th, and I didn't get you guys any presents!"

"Calm down, it's fine. You don't have to get anything if you don't want, and you still have a while to go shopping. Then, there's like a gift exchange at the Snow Ball, if you remember," Max chimed in. El nodded. She had remembered kids running over to a table with brightly wrapped boxes, and handing them off to their friends. She remembered Dustin handing Lucas a Supercom box that had had a rubber chicken in it.

Then Lucas had given Dustin a book on how to exterminate lice.

El sat for a moment and thought, her head resting on Mike's shoulder. What should she get her friends? Max would be easy: Anything related to skateboarding or soccer. Lucas could probably be pleased with a Star Wars action figure, and Dustin, too. Will would like anything to do with art maybe. But what about Mike? Shouldn't she get him something special? Like...

Oh, she didn't understand half of these holidays. Getting presents that varied for each person, telling small children fairy tales of fat men breaking and entering? Bunnies that pooped chocolate to celebrate Jesus dying? People wearing green and getting drunk? Couples making single people feel bad?

Holidays were a bit of a weak point for her. So she did what she knew best. She called for backup.

"Max? I need help."

Max raised an eyebrow. "With what?" El had recently warmed up to Max (oddly enough, the day she and Will walked in on Lucas and Max sucking face) but hadn't called her that much.

"I wanna get Mike a Christmas present. But I don't know what him should get. That sounded wrong. Did I say that wrong?" She asked.

"Yeah. You don't know what to get him?" Max felt bad for the girl. Luckily, she hadn't had many slip-ups in school. "Hmm. Well... has he

mentioned wanting anything recently? Other than less homework, I mean."

"Uhm... I dunno..." El felt ashamed, and Max could hear it in her voice.

"Look, it's okay. I'll have a million ideas what to get someone, than when I go shopping or brainstorm I'll completely draw a blank. What does he like?"

"Uhm... D&D. And... Star Wars. And Science class. We both love U2. Maybe I could get him a mixtape or something?"

"Now we're talking! You could make him a tape of your favorite songs!"

El gasped. "I could! So much thanks!" The line went dead.

Max sighed. I am getting her a copy of like, The Cat In The Hat, or something, for Christmas.

El sat down at her desk and grabbed some paper. She quickly wrote a list-

MIXTAPE FOR MIKE:

Sunday Bloody Sunday- U2

Every Step You Take- The Police

Girls On Film- Duran Duran

Time After Time- Cyndi Lauper

Michelle- The Beatles

Africa- Toto

Take On Me- A-ha

Satisfied, she smiled and ran downstairs to start finding her songs to record.

Meanwhile, Mike was freaking out just as much, if not more, trying to find El a perfect gift. Or at least, that's what he thought he was doing. In reality, he was annoying Nancy as best he could.

"What about, like.. Earrings!"

"Her ears aren't pierced, dumbass."

"A necklace?"

"That could work. Got \$30?"

"No..."

"Then that's a no."

Mike banged his head on the desk. "Why is this so hard?" He mumbled.

Nancy smirked knowingly. "Because you're so totally in love for El and you want everything to be perfect?"

Mike shot up like a spark. "I am not in love with her!" How did she know? Was she a mind-reader? Did Lucas tell her? Shit! Shit! Shit! Abort!

Nancy nodded. "Sure. And Dustin's getting married to a pineapple this weekend."

Mike rolled his eyes. "We're teenagers. Isn't that a little too young for love?"

Nancy shook her head. "Not necessarily, no. I saw the way you guys were looking at each other on Halloween. You guys are adorable together."

OhMyGod mayday!

Mike rolled his eyes again. "Nancy. Maybe you missed the part where we're 13 and her dad is chief Hopper. It isn't love."

Nancy scoffed. "Well, you guys cuddle and kiss and hold hands a lot

for not being a couple."

Mike turned scarlet. "Maybe she'd like a bracelet," he muttered, changing the subject.

Nancy nodded. "Good choice. I know just where to find the perfect one."

Seven hours later, El was exhausted. She had waited for the songs to come on the radio so she could record them, and finally they had. All except the one song that really really mattered. She was about to give up. Until...

Every breath you take

Every move you make

Every bond you break

Every step you take

I'll be watching you

El sat straight up. Finally. She began to record the song, reminiscing the first dance she had had with Mike... it was perfect, wasn't it?

Just like him.

Two days before Christmas, the Party held a gift exchange. Will took note of what everyone got:

MIKE: Star Wars boxed set from Dustin and Lucas, Mixtape from El/Jane, Mixtape from Will, framed photo of the us on Halloween from Max.

EL/JANE: Eggos from Dustin and Lucas, framed photo of the us on Halloween from Max, adorable bracelet from Mike, mixtape from Will.

DUSTIN: Book on how to get girls from Lucas, photo from Max, Chewbacca plushie from El/Jane, mixtape from Will, walkie batteries (20 pack!) from Mike.

LUCAS: Book on how to get girls from Dustin, C3PO plushie from El/Jane, Batteries from Mike (everyone is running out), photo from Max, mixtape from Will.

WILL: Luke Skywalker action figure from El/Jane, photo from Max, colored pencils from Mike and Lucas, wizard plushie from Dustin.

MAX: Skateboard stickers from Lucas, Mike, and Dustin, soccer ball jawbreaker from El, and mixtape from Will.

El was reminded of something Max had once said. "Third time's the charm."

She had spent her first Christmas hiding in the woods eating squirrels.

She had spent her second Christmas being isolated from her friends and eating stale cookies.

But this Christmas?

Was the best Christmas.

Her favorite part by far being the happy exchange between her and Mike, when Mike handed her a beautiful bracelet with a snowflake charm on it, El leaning in to kiss Mike. The Party had watched intently, but they had not interrupted. They had to admit, it was kinda adorable.

But no matter how young they may have been, they all knew it was love, in all of it's great glory.

Author's Note:

Also on fanfiction.net under LizzByers (Chapters three and four are on there, too)